

# From Restoration to Attribution

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——— The article analyses the process of restoration of a painting from the Vilnius Academy of Arts museum collection and presents biographical facts of the artist. The basis for the analysis was the name of the artist, previously unknown to Lithuanian researchers, discovered by the author of this article during restoration. Several years of intense investigation led to the discovery of a world-renowned artist with a remarkable fate, with roots in Lithuania.

*Keywords:* Evgenii (Zema) Brukman, easel painting, biography, restoration, expatriate artists.

The Restoration Laboratory of the Restoration Department of the Vilnius Academy of Arts (VAA) receives a large number of paintings by former students of the Academy of Arts, which are stored in the VAA museum. They are handled by students of the restoration of easel paintings program of the department as part of their coursework and diploma assignments. In October 2015, a large-format (165 × 114 cm) painting by Zema Brukman, painted in the style of social realism characteristic of the time, entitled *Construction of the Power Plant in the Collective Farm* (Lith. *Kolūkio elektrinės statyboje*), was delivered from the museum and restored by the author of this article. The work turned out to be not only great material for students to improve their skills but also an incentive to learn more about the artist who created the work and to follow the traces of his creative career. It is important to note that works of artists from their student years do not receive much attention from scholars, but sometimes they are just as interesting and can provide additional insights for understanding their creative personality.

The aim of this article is to give an overview of the restoration process of one exhibit from the VAA museum, which triggered interest in the artist's biography, and to present the facts collected about the artist's creative pathways. The article describes the investigation and contains an addendum that is an important source for further research into Brukman's biography in the future and is therefore published in full.

The starting point for this article was the aforementioned work from the artist's student years, including its visual aspect and material properties. Under the guidance of the VAA professors, the painting was carefully examined and restored. Special thanks go to the supervisor of this research effort, Dr. Dalia Klajumienė,<sup>1</sup> whose support was a major contributing factor to the successful completion of the project. During the long restoration process, it was possible not only to identify the physical features of the work but also to collect information about the artist who created it. After the completion of the VAA bachelor's degree studies, the search for information continued and extended beyond the academy, eventually leading to the artist's relatives in Denmark. The artist's wife and a

<sup>1</sup> Dalia Klajumienė, Ph.D., is an art historian, director of the VAA Institute of Art History and a lecturer at the Department of Restoration. She conducts seminars for students of both Bachelor's and Master's Degrees and supervises the preparation of the theoretical part of the Master's thesis.



1.

*Construction of the Power Plant in the Collective Farm* (Lith. *Kolūkio elektrinės statyba*), Z. Brukman, 1953.  
The painting before the restoration 09 11 2015, photo by Rūta Nazaraite

close family friend were also consulted for this article. In 2021, a paper on this research was presented at the international student conference “Art and Architecture Conservation Training in Europe: Relevant Experiences and Mastering Conservation Methods” which led to the preparation of this article covering the period between the creation of the painting in 1953 and its restoration in 2015–2016.

The painting *Construction of the Power Plant in the Collective Farm* is a graduating work by Zema Brukman painted in 1953 in the pastose manner, oil on canvas, at the Vilnius Art Institute (now Vilnius Academy of Arts). The painting is a typical work of Soviet post-war socialist realism, both in terms of the subject matter and the color scheme [fig. 1]. The bright blue sky and the glorified depiction of workers’ life was a template used by many students of painting at the Vilnius Art Institute during that period [figs. 2, 3]. The foreground of the painting shows a group of people. Among

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2.  
*Calf Shed in the Collective Farm* (Lith. *Veršiukų ferma kolūkyje*) (150 × 219 cm), Jonas Švažas, 1953, Vilnius Academy of Arts Museum archive, T-748, LATGA, Vilnius, 2023



3.  
*A Visit to Zmejauskas* (Lith. *Svečiuose pas Zmejauską*) (210 × 132 cm), Vincas Norkus, 1952, Vilnius Academy of Arts Museum archive, T-161

them the most important seems to be a man – perhaps the chairman of the collective farm or maybe just a worker – who is greeted by other people: pioneers wearing red ties present him with flowers, and the peoples' faces are full of smiles and pride. The figure of the chairman is modest: he wears an unbuttoned shirt with rolled-up sleeves, as if he had just returned from field work. His expression is reserved and emotionless. The whole scheme of representation has a distinctly socialist-realist tone and conveys the importance of the working class. The ideas of socialist realism were most intensively expressed in Lithuanian art in the 1930s to the 1950s, and Brukman's painting belongs to that particular period. It is no secret that these ideas were forced upon artists, and any variety of style or deviation from the staged reality was not tolerated.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that *Calf Shed in the Collective Farm* (Lith. *Veršiukų ferma kolūkyje*), the graduating work by Brukman's fellow student Jonas Švažas, was included in the catalogue of Lithuanian Art,<sup>3</sup> while Brukman's name almost disappeared from the lists of artists of the time. This circumstance prompted me to investigate the reasons behind this show of reticence.

It is important to start from the discussion of the restoration process because, as mentioned above, the discovery of the artist's name during the restoration process is what triggered this investigation. The painting was brought from the VAA museum vaults to the laboratory of the Department of Restoration where it was examined, its condition assessed, and the condition report<sup>4</sup> completed. The most serious damage to the work was a tear in the very center of the composition, near the girl with the flowers standing closest to the chairman of the collective farm. This tear had, over time, caused the canvas to sag by almost half a meter [fig. 4]. Despite the sufficiently strong hold of the paint layer and the primer to the base, the uneven surface caused flaking and crumbling of the paint at the point of the tear and within a 15 cm radius around it. This fundamental damage threatened the visual cohesion of the painting, since further cracking of the paint

2 Monika Jurkėnienė, "Socialistinis realizmas dailėje" [*Socialist realism in art*] (interactive), in *Visuotinė lietuvių enciklopedija* [*Lithuanian Encyclopedia*], 2018, accessed August 7, 2019, [vie.lt/Straipsnis/socialistinis-realizmas-daileje-124902](http://vie.lt/Straipsnis/socialistinis-realizmas-daileje-124902).

3 Pranas Gudynas, *Lietuvių dailė* [Lithuanian art], (Kaunas: Valstybinė grožinės literatūros leidykla, 1954), 47.

4 The stages and processes of the restoration of the painting were carried out in 2015–2016 by the author of the article Rūta Nazaraitė. The Conservation Report is kept at the Vilnius Academy of Arts, Department of Restoration.

may have resulted in the irretrievable loss of details in clothing or faces. The thick pastose layer of paint used to depict the figures was sensitive to the movement of the canvas. As the paint dried over time, it contained less and less of the oil that gave it elasticity, thus becoming brittle and fragile.

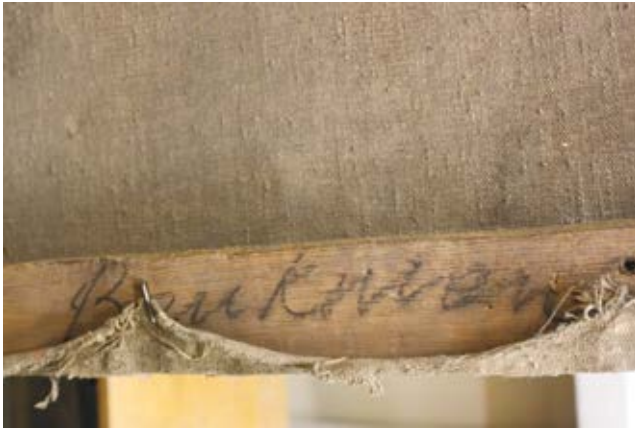
Another concern threatening the condition of the painting was the inflexible construction of the strainer, which restricted the natural movement of the painting's base. Easel paintings on canvas are characterized by the movement of the textile base caused by fluctuations of relative humidity and temperature as well as by natural ageing. These conditions have a direct influence on the tension of canvas on the strainer. In order to minimize the detrimental effect of these factors on the paint layer, efforts were made to replace the original frame with a flexible stretcher. This type of canvas mounting can be raised or lowered by means of wedges at the corners, so that the tension of canvas can be easily adjusted without removing it from the stretcher. Given that the deformation and damage to the base of the painting had a significant impact on the stability of the paint layer, it was decided to replace the existing strainer with a new stretcher. The new flexible stretcher should make it possible to adjust the movement of the canvas in the event of any future problems with the tension of the base.

Examination of the edgings of the painting suggested that the canvas may have been stretched by the artist himself, as Brukman's signature in Latin characters ("Brukman") was found on the strainer bars [fig. 5]. The base of the painting was stapled to the second letter "r" of the calligraphically written surname, evidencing the sequence in which the canvas was prepared, as there were no other signs that the painting had been restretched from another mounting. Also, the artist's highly expressive manner of painting was noted from the now hardened and stiff side edgings of the painting which were used for wiping paint from the brushes [fig. 6].

During the restoration, the painting was consolidated, and the damage was repaired. Problematic deformations on the painting base were successfully smoothed out. This process was carried out by slightly wetting and softening the back of the painting with distilled water and gently



4.  
Tear in the painting,  
the back side of the  
painting. Photo before the  
restoration 09 11 2015,  
photo by Rūta Nazaraite



5.  
Artist's signature. Photo  
before the restoration  
09 11 2015, photo by Rūta  
Nazaraite



6.  
The side of the painting used to clean the paint. Photo  
before restoration 09 11 2015, photo by Rūta Nazaraite



7.  
The fixing of the painting.  
Photo during the  
restoration 16 07 2016,  
photo by Rūta Nazaraite



8.  
The process of cleaning  
dirt from the painting.  
The left part shows the  
paint layer after the dirt  
has been removed. Photo  
during the restoration  
11 09 2016, photo by Rūta  
Nazaraite

placing the painting on a smooth marble table surface. After smoothing the base of the work, the remaining narrow gap in the tear was sealed to prevent further deformation of the base and loss of the paint layer. This and other minor cracks were repaired by filling them with linen fibers and reinforcing them with a special acrylic emulsion.<sup>5</sup>

The uneven and deteriorated edgings of the painting were reinforced by lining them with linen strips, which in density and weave were identical to the original base. Glued with acrylic emulsion, the reinforced edgings improved the stability of the painting and helped to distribute the tension of the base more evenly. Once the edgings were ready, the canvas was stretched and nailed onto the new stretcher [fig. 7].

<sup>5</sup> *Plectol B500* acrylic emulsion was used for the restoration work. This water-based, thermoplastic acrylic polymer emulsion is a restoration adhesive developed for professional use.

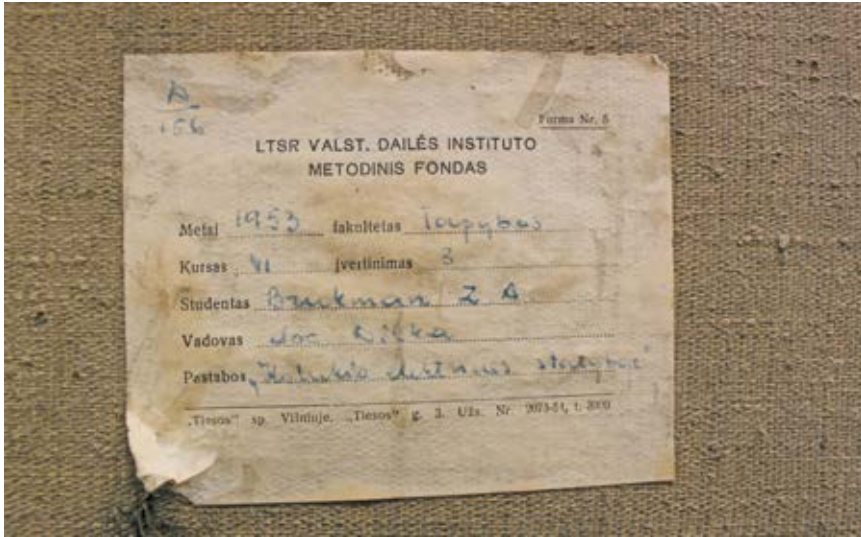




9.  
The front side of the painting after the restoration, 10 10 2016, photo by Rūta Nazaraite

In addition to other processes aimed at the reinforcement and aesthetic restoration of the work as a whole, it was important to clean the painting of dirt. Dirt was removed from the surface with cotton swabs moistened in distilled water, revealing the extremely bright rich color scheme of the work [fig. 8] which had previously appeared considerably duller. The restoration of *Construction of the Power Plant in the Collective Farm* brought out the harmony of bright contrasting colors used by the artist in the 1950s [fig. 9]. The same color scheme is clearly present in his later works too, although they are painted in a completely different style.

The painting in question can be appreciated for its historical eloquence and the intrigue of the artist's personality. Interestingly, in 1953, when this work was painted, it received a very mediocre evaluation grade: the "LSSR State Institute of Art. Methodological Fund" label on the back indicates a grade of three out of the five-point system [fig. 10]. Looking at the situation from a contemporary perspective, it becomes clear that



10.

The label on the back side of the painting. Photo before the restoration 09 11 2015, photo by Rūta Nazaraitė

creativity was restricted during the years of repression, so artists must have faced the duality of self-expression. Evaluation of artistic works was often influenced by political and social factors, and it is difficult to determine now how exactly the final academic grades were awarded. It can be assumed that the author was discriminated against because of his Jewish nationality, but there are also aspects of the painting that do not conform to the strict canons of social realism in art of that time. Comparing Brukman's graduating work with the painting *The Calf Shed in the Collective Farm* by his fellow student Jonas Švažas, who was awarded the highest grade in the same year, Brukman's work<sup>6</sup> features more abstract elements, especially in the background. There is much less detail in the faces and the colors are contrasting, while the background at the right edge of the painting is rather flat and does not convey the depth of perspective adequately. Thus, Brukman's tendency to "defy" strict academicism was already evident early in his career; while expressionist outbursts in his works of the time may have contributed to the lower grade for his final work.<sup>7</sup>

6 *Vilniaus valstybinio dailės instituto diplominių darbų sąrašas* [List of diploma theses at Vilnius State Institute of Arts], sequence number 89, the book was filled in 1952–1959, the pages of the inventory book are not numbered. The book is kept in the archives of the Vilnius Academy of Arts Museum.

7 An interesting detail of the story is that Brukman's official biography, obtained from his wife, states that the painter graduated from the Academy with the highest honours.

The discovery of the artist's signature during the restoration process of this forgotten and unexhibited painting intrigued us and triggered a desire to learn more about the artist and his fate. Is it possible that an imposed ideology might not hinder the efforts of an artist to discover themselves and unleash their creativity later in the life? Can an artist change their type of self-expression and move away from embedded academic principles? Answering these questions necessitated further research into the work and life of the artist who created the painting.

### The Search for the Author

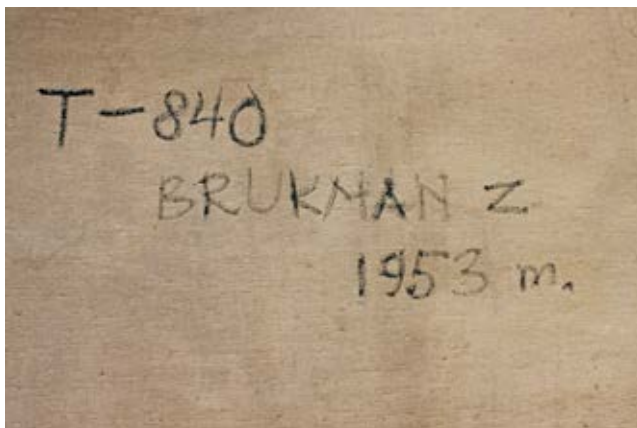
Our desire to learn more about the artist, whose name, “Brukman Z” was written in large letters on the back of the painting, occupying nearly a quarter of the canvas [fig. 11], was ignited when the painting *Construction of the Power Plant in the Collective Farm* was still at the Vilnius Academy of Arts Restoration Laboratory. It looked as if the name, together with the year and the museum inventory number,<sup>8</sup> was written here by someone else, not the artist himself. The other two signatures found on the strainer refer to the same person, that is, Brukman [figs. 5 and 12], which only confirms the authorship. The label contains an even more complete form of the name, “Brukman Z. A.,” where the two letters are the abbreviations of the first and patronymic names.

The name on the label, “Brukman Z. A.” turned out to be an unproductive clue in the search for the artist. Only one interactive catalogue of social realism artists contained the entry “Zema Aronovich Brukman,” but neither his biography nor an example of his work was available.<sup>9</sup> The website indicated only his date of birth (1925) and the approximate time of death (1958–1967). The year of birth given on the website is the same as the year of birth recorded in the VAA museum inventory book,<sup>10</sup> where final works of students taken into custody by the museum were listed. In the book, an entry line with the name of “Zema Brookman Arono” was found, with an

<sup>8</sup> Inv. no. T-840.

<sup>9</sup> “Таджикский художник Брукман Зема Аронович” [Tajik artist Brukman Zema Aronovich] (interactive), in *Соцреализм. Киевский Клуб Коллекционеров* [Socialist Realism. Kiev Collectors Club], accessed September 9, 2019, <https://socrealizm.com.ua/gallery/artist/brukman-za-1925>.

<sup>10</sup> *Vilniaus valstybinio dailės instituto diplominių darbų sąrašas* [List of diploma theses at Vilnius State Institute of Arts], sequence number 83, the book was filled in 1952–1959, the pages of the inventory book are not numbered. The book is kept in the archives of the Vilnius Academy of Arts Museum.



11.  
Inscription on the back side of the painting.  
Photo before the restoration 09 11 2015,  
photo by Rūta Nazaraite



12.  
Inscription on the picture stretcher. Photo before the restoration 09 11 2015, photo by Rūta Nazaraite

inventory number corresponding to the one written on the painting. The book also contains the title of the painting, the technique, the name of the teacher (V. Dilka), the grade and the faculty (Painting faculty). A note added later in pencil indicates that the painting was exhibited at the Lithuanian State Conservatoire (now the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre) in 1957.<sup>11</sup> Despite its importance, this information did not provide any details of the artist's biography, so the search continued.

The discoveries that followed were indeed intriguing. We came across some interesting biographical facts about the artist on the internet which pushed the search in a new direction. Namely, we found a person who

<sup>11</sup> *Vilniaus valstybinio dailės instituto diplominių darbų sąrašas* [List of diploma theses at Vilnius State Institute of Arts], sequence number 83, the book was filled in 1952–1959, the pages of the inventory book are not numbered. The book is kept in the archives of the Vilnius Academy of Arts Museum.

had the same surname, but a different first name, Evgenii Brukman (Lith. Eugenijus Brukmanas), a Lithuania-born artist of Jewish origin. Our interest was sparked by the details of his biography: *born in Vilnius in 1925, studied at the Vilnius Academy of Arts (then the Vilnius Art Institute) from 1946 to 1953, moved to Tajikistan after graduation, then went to Israel where he gained national recognition and also became recognized in Western countries.*<sup>12</sup>

In the light of the facts we already knew about the artist, the matches in this information outnumbered the mismatches: the dates of birth were same, and the year 1953 written on the painting coincided with the period of studies in Vilnius indicated in Evgenii Brukman's biography. The facts were strong enough to suggest that Zema Brukman, the artist of *Construction of the Power Plant in the Collective Farm*, and Evgenii Brukman were the same person. Yet, despite identical surnames, the first names were completely different. Different names may refer to different people, all the more so given that confused names and surnames were commonplace in the post-war turmoil of those times. All of this necessitated finding more evidence to confirm the identity of the two Brukmans.

The next step was to examine the archives of the Vilnius Academy of Arts museum. In the Academy's archives, a note was found stating that the artist's personal file had been transferred to the Lithuanian Literature and Art Archive. Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain permission to examine the file, so access to the information contained therein will only be available in the future.<sup>13</sup> The earliest inventory book<sup>14</sup> of the academy museum contains a single entry with the name of Brukman (Zema Brukman Arono); there was no other Brukman who may have graduated from the Academy in the same or similar years. This suggested that the painting *Construction of the Power Plant in the Collective Farm* stored by the Vilnius Academy of Arts was painted by Evgenii Brukman, who, probably due to political reasons, changed his name from Zema to Evgenii. According to

<sup>12</sup> "Evgenii Brukman" (interactive), Facebook, September 8, 2019, [https://facebook.com/pg/Evgenii-Brukman-178053152222747/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://facebook.com/pg/Evgenii-Brukman-178053152222747/about/?ref=page_internal).

<sup>13</sup> Presumably, a review of Brukman's thesis could be found there, as well as information related to the conflict between the artist and the USSR Artists' Union.

<sup>14</sup> *Vilniaus valstybinio dailės instituto diplominių darbų sąrašas* [List of diploma theses at Vilnius State Institute of Arts], sequence number 83, the book was filled in 1952–1959, the pages of the inventory book are not numbered. The book is kept in the archives of the Vilnius Academy of Arts Museum.

the interactive source mentioned above, the exact date of Zema Aronovich Brukman's death is unknown. This led to the hypothesis that the artist may have been reported missing and later, when he was not found for a number of years, simply declared dead. Interestingly, the year 1973 mentioned in the biography of Evgenii Brukman<sup>15</sup> as the year he emigrated from the Soviet Union to Israel is six years after Zema Aronovich Brukman was declared dead in the period between 1958 and 1967.

The information found suggested a way to finally solve this puzzle of an artist with two names. We needed direct contact with Evgenii Brukman's family or other people who knew him. The latter were sought through various online platforms. After unsuccessful attempts to establish contact by sending emails to the official email address of Evgenii Brukman found on the internet (eventually we learned that he had passed away in 2011), we found David Dellagi, a student of Evgenii Brukman. He is a contemporary performance artist, a surrealist, who worked with Evgenii Brukman.<sup>16</sup> Dellagi confirmed that he was a student of Evgenii Brukman between 1988 and 1992, but did not know the details of his teacher's background. Dellagi advised us to contact Lara Brukman, Evgenii Brukman's wife, who was living in Copenhagen, or his friend Ekaterine Bagdavadze.<sup>17</sup> After an unsuccessful attempt to contact Lara Brukman at the address given by Dellagi, the investigation came to a standstill. As Dellagi did not have Bagdavadze's contact details, it seemed that we have reached a dead end, until quite by chance we came across one Bagdavadze on Facebook. When asked if she might know the artist Evgenii Brukman, she confirmed that she was a friend of his family, and this was how our communication with her and Lara Brukman started.

Lara Brukman and Ekaterine Bagdavadze confirmed that Zema Brukman and Evgenii Brukman were one and the same person.<sup>18</sup> They provided us with the official, detailed biography of this world-renowned

<sup>15</sup> The official biography of Evgenii Brukman, provided by the artist's wife Lara Brukman. The text is stored in the personal archive of R. Nazaraitė.

<sup>16</sup> "Erfaren billedkunstner underviser på nyt koncentreret tegne- og malekursus for unge" [*Experienced artist teaches new concentrated drawing and painting course for young people*] (interactive), in *Rudelsdal Billedskole*, accessed November 9, 2021, <https://billedskolen.rudersdal.dk/rkb/temaer/erfaren-billedkunstner-underviser-paa-nyt-koncentreret-tegne-og-malekursus-unge>.

<sup>17</sup> Information extracted from correspondence with David Dellagi, March 9, 2017. The letters are stored in the personal archive of R. Nazaraitė.

<sup>18</sup> Information extracted from correspondence with L. Brukman and E. Bagdavadze, from December 17, 2018, to March 7, 2019. The letters are stored in the personal archive of R. Nazaraitė.

painter, who started his career at the Vilnius Art Institute. The final conclusion, therefore, is unambiguous: the painting *Construction of the Power Plant in the Collective Farm* was painted by Evgenii Brukman while he was studying at the Vilnius Art Institute. Analysis of the painting disclosed a link to a noteworthy artist who, although little known in Lithuania, was recognized in other countries and whose works are appreciated and sought by art collectors. I am very grateful to Lara Brukman and Ekaterine Bagdavadze for providing us with valuable information about Brukman's life. Without their contributions, several years of searching would have resulted in a much more modest outcome.

The addendum to this article contains a biography of Evgenii Brukman as endorsed by Lara Brukman. Some facts, such as the names of Brukman's teachers, have been corrected, but it has not been possible to confirm whether the artist worked at the Kaunas Institute of Art between 1954 and 1956. Lara Brukman gave a detailed account of her husband's life, the difficulties he faced, and his path to success. The text also lists the artist's achievements, art galleries associated with his work, and places where Brukman worked and created his paintings.

### Addendum – Evgenii Brukman's biography<sup>19</sup>

#### Childhood and youth

Evgenii Brukman was born on January 25, 1925 in Vilnius, Lithuania. His father was Aron Brukman, a chemical engineer, and his mother was Evgenia (maiden name Zuckerman), a housekeeper. Yet, in his early years, Evgenii Brukman had a gift and thirst for painting.

At the beginning of 1940, the Red Army invaded Lithuania. This triggered the deportation of Lithuanians, Poles, and Jews, as they were considered unreliable by Soviet ideology. Brukman's family was included in this deportation. His childhood was over, and he enjoyed no adolescence: the family settled in Siberia. Such a life meant exhausting and half-starved existence, hard labor for 12 hours a day, and limited rations of bread, plain soup, and a couple of spoonfuls of porridge. He was saved by an army call-up

<sup>19</sup> The official biography of Evgenii Brukman, provided by the artist's wife Lara Brukman. The text is stored in the personal archive of R. Nazaraite.



13.

Portrait photograph of Eugenijus (Zema) Brukmanas, year unknown. Photo source: *EVGENII BRUKMAN* (interactive), in *Evgenii Brukman official website*, October 13, 2019, <http://www.brukman.dk/evgeniibrukman.html>

in 1943. After completion of officer training, he was sent to the front, where he traveled all the way to Elba.

Released from the army in June of 1946, Brukman entered Vilnius Arts Academy to study painting and environmental art.

Among his teachers were famous artists and professors: Bronius Uogintas, Antanas Gudaitis, Algirdas Petrulis, Levas Karsavinas,<sup>20</sup> and many others, who served as inspiration for highly accomplished craftsmanship and arts. The academic library comprised an extensive collection of books on arts, history, philosophy, and literature. Brukman spent much of his time in the library, mastering these subjects. In 1953, Brukman graduated with honors. From 1954 to 1956, he taught drawing and painting classes at the Applied Arts College in Kaunas.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Names and surnames corrected according by the book: Ingrida Korsakaitė, Petras Aleksandravičius, and Irena Kostkevičiūtė, *XX a. lietuvių dailės istorija: Lietuvių tarybinė dailė, 1940–1960* [History of 20th Century Lithuanian Art: Soviet Lithuanian Art, 1940–1960], (Vilnius: Vaga, 1990), 461–527.

<sup>21</sup> Although five artists who had studied at the Applied Arts College in Kaunas in the mid-20th century were interviewed, unfortunately none of them could testify about Brukman's teaching in Kaunas. No further information about this fact has been gathered so far. I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Raimonda Simanaitienė, a lecturer at the Vytautas Magnus University and the Kaunas Faculty of the Vilnius Academy of Arts, for her contacts with the graduates.



### Tajikistan – The fight for self-expression and freethinking

In 1957, Brukman was given the assignment to work at the Union of Artists' artistic fund in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. There he created a series of monumental works of art in the abstract-formal genre. In these works, Brukman implemented ideas for his future research, which contradicted the artistic direction of that time. Quickly, Brukman showed himself as a talented and hardworking artist and soon became one of the leading artists of Tajikistan. During his work in the Artists Union of Tajikistan, he devoted himself to creative activities and participated in local and national exhibitions. Numerous artworks by Brukman were acquired by the National Museum of Tajikistan. During his work in the artistic fund of Tajikistan, Brukman won a top award in the national contest on decoration of the "Achievements of the national economy of Tajikistan" exhibition. Along with his work at the artistic fund, he was a teacher at the Dushanbe's Art College until 1967.

His ceramic panel, 16m x 16m, in the center of Dushanbe was vigorously criticized by the board of the Union of Artists. In the records of its secretariat in Moscow, it is stated that he was an "abstractionist, formalist, cosmopolitan, and admirer of western arts;" his "delusions" were discussed nine times at this institution. When he returned from a trip to Moscow, he found his studio plundered; all his works, materials, diaries, poems, and other writing had disappeared. Expulsion from the Union of Artists caused him to lose work and orders. However, he kept his head and started to work as a teacher of architecture and environmental art at the architecture department of the Dushanbe Polytechnic Institute.

Years of hard work in absolute isolation, without any opportunity to take part in exhibitions or showcase his work and projects, enabled Brukman to find conscious spiritual independence. In 1969, he began to work as a teacher of architecture and environmental art at the Moscow Institute of Architecture's fine arts program. At the same time, he was a candidate for a degree in physics of color and light. In 1969, Brukman was invited to be the chief artist and scene designer for a new dramatic theatre in Tiraspol, Moldavia, where he worked until 1972. In cooperation with the theater director, Aranetskaya, he developed an innovative concept for the



14.

Evgenii Brukman, *EXPRESSIVE FORMS*, year unknown (interactive), in *Evgenii Brukman official website*, October 13, 2019, [http://www.brukman.dk/expressive\\_01.html](http://www.brukman.dk/expressive_01.html)

decorations and costumes. Along with his work at the theater, Brukman created monumental projects and decorations: ceramics, design, and paintings.

In the late 1970s, Brukman made a decision to move to Vilnius with his family and to fight for his right to emigrate. It took three and a half years.

#### Israel/USA – Beginning of independent creative work

On May 7, 1973, Brukman and his family arrived in Israel and settled in Haifa. In August of 1973, his first personal exhibition took place in Tel Aviv, at the Center of Culture and Arts. All of his 68 exhibited surrealist works were sold. Brukman's success drew a wide response in multiple Israeli newspapers. After this exhibition, Brukman continued his work in another direction, devoting his zeal and time to research in the fields of abstract art and multidimensional transparent space.

The first comprehensive catalogue was composed by an art critic, Amnon Barzel, a curator of the Israeli pavilion at the Biennale in San Paolo and Venice and the director of the new Jewish Museum in Berlin.

From 1973 to 1985, Brukman was a member of the Artists Union of Israel. In 1975, he won the first prize at the Maritime Museum in Haifa. The same year, he established a studio in the center of Haifa, where he created and held exhibitions. This studio was open to everyone. In 1979, Brukman moved to Tel Aviv, where he worked until 1985.



15.  
Evgenii Brukman, *FIGURATIVE ART*, year unknown (interactive), in *Evgenii Brukman official website*, October 13, 2019, [http://www.brukman.dk/figurative\\_04.html](http://www.brukman.dk/figurative_04.html)

In 1980, Brukman was invited to exhibit his works at the Warren Robinson Fine Arts Gallery in Detroit, USA. The first and all the following exhibitions at this gallery brought him success and drew a wide response in newspapers. This allowed him to work with another gallery – the American Central Fine Arts Gallery. Following this, his artwork grew in popularity on the American art market.

From 1979 to 1988, Brukman collaborated with the Carmen Fine Art Gallery in Ottawa, Canada, where he held regular exhibitions of his new work. In 1981, he had a successful exhibition at the Coley Gallery in San Francisco, presenting his work on enameled metal.

#### Denmark and Sweden – When Brukman perfected his art

In 1984, Brukman took a trip to Paris and Copenhagen. Copenhagen amazed him: It had a calm and leisurely pace of life, simple and quiet culture, clean streets, and the main thing – plenty of art, galleries, and museums. Here, for the first time, Brukman became familiar with Danish expressionism and the art of the Cobra group. This was what he needed to know, understand, and see. He made a decision to settle in Denmark.

From 1985, Brukman and his wife Lara were permanent residents of Denmark. Here, Brukman found the key to free expression and new forms in art. During that time, he found a new creative direction in his art career.



16.  
Evgenii Brukman, *PASTEL*, year unknown (interactive),  
in *Evgenii Brukman official website*, October 13, 2019,  
[http://www.brukman.dk/pastel\\_04.html](http://www.brukman.dk/pastel_04.html)

From 1985, he was a member of the Artist Union of Denmark and of the UNESCO International Art Association. The same year, he held a successful exhibition at the famous experimental Gallery Marius, where he received dozens of proposals for further exhibitions.

From 1986, Brukman took part in exhibitions organized by art clubs of numerous companies, banks, and insurance firms. The same year, he participated in the restoration of the Aleksander Nevsky Russian Orthodox Church in Copenhagen.

This period was followed by showings in famous galleries in Denmark and Sweden, personal exhibitions, and commissions for monumental works, design, and interior decorations from various companies from Sweden and Denmark. At the same time, he took part in group exhibitions. Those exhibitions were accompanied by publications, curator texts, and posters. All the posters of exhibited works were registered at the Danish Design Museum.

In 1989, Brukman held his first solo exhibition at the Bulowska Gallery in Malmö, Sweden. It was very successful. Afterwards, he received a big sponsored studio space in Malmö. From that moment on, Brukman worked in two studios – in Denmark and Sweden. In his Malmö studio, he developed new skills to experiment with various techniques and styles.

Brukman believed that an artist needs to learn and experiment with paint styles in order to master techniques of light and color. There, he created his major three-dimensional paintings.

Brukman started to paint freely, passionately, with volumetric forms, in both vertical and horizontal movements. His shapes contain light, tones, semitones, reflections and shadows. The object of his art is the product of his inner vision. Light is the principal factor of Brukman's painting and his strongest tool. "I paint with light, moving from all factors of light, completing the surface texture with rudeness, power, tenderness – all natural factors, except their external form and appearance," said Brukman.

Brukman painted spontaneously, without any drafts, compositions, or sketches, guided by his inner vision. When a vision disappeared and a new one emerged, he considered the work to be accomplished, and then he signed and dated the painting.

Brukman passed away on March 2, 2011, at the age of 86. In the history of modern art, he was entered as the founder of an absolutely new direction in three-dimensional, volumetric, and transparent painting. He left an important legacy for the world of art. His works are part of numerous galleries, museums, and private and corporate collections in America, Canada, Denmark, Sweden, Australia, Israel, the UK, Japan, Russia, and Germany. Despite the difficulties of his life, including deportation to Siberia, war, and persecution as a modernist painter by communist ideologues he remained faithful to his vision, and he always was an individual. In his last manuscript, Brukman wrote: "I will not leave, my creation is eternal. The main thing is that what I have done is an important milestone in the history of art. I have filled the gap and answered questions that had no answers."

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Santrauka

## Nuo paveikslo restauravimo iki jo atributavimo

Rūta Nazaraitė

*Reikšminiai žodžiai:* Eugenijus (Zema) Brukmanas, molbertinė tapyba, biografija, restauravimas, išeivijos dailininkai.

Vilniaus dailės akademijos restauravimo laboratorijoje prasidėjęs buvusio akademijos studento biografijos tyrimas atskleidė intriguojantį menininko likimą. Zema Brukmanas 1953 metais baigė Vilniaus dailės akademiją (buvusį Vilniaus dailės institutą) kaip tapytojas, o jo baigiamasis darbas „Kolūkio elektrinės statyboje“ šiuo metu yra saugomas akademijos muziejuje. Akivaizdu, kad Zema Brukmanas vietiniu mastu yra neatpažįstamas ir istorijos vingiuose pamirštas vardas. 2015 m. Brukmano paveikslas buvo perkeltas į akademijos Restauravimo katedrą (anksčiau – Paminklotvarkos), jos laboratorijose buvo atliekami restauravimo darbai, susieti su studentų kursiniu darbu. Vis dėlto paveikslo nagrinėjimas neapsiribojo vien restauravimo užduotimi. Atrandant vieną istorijos detalę po kitos, paaiškėjo daug įdomių ir anksčiau nežinomų faktų, Zemą Brukmaną siejančių su Eugenijumi Brukmanu (*Evgenii Brukman*), kuris pasaulyje yra žinomas ir pripažintas tapytojas. Nepaisant daugelio sutapimų, pagrindinis klausimas dar kelerius metus liko neatsakytas – ar galima šiuos du dailininkus identifikuoti kaip tą patį asmenį? Akademijoje restauruoto socialistinio realizmo paveikslo tapyba ir Eugenijaus Brukmano šedevrų stiliai labai skiriasi. Galiausiai dėl laimingo atsitiktinumo dviejų tapytojų tapatybės klausimas buvo išspręstas, o išvada yra galutinė ir džiuginanti – Eugenijus Brukmanas yra paveikslo „Kolūkio elektrinės statyboje“ autorius. Taigi šis atradimas parodo, kaip smalsumas atliekant akademines užduotis padeda gauti platesnių naudingų rezultatų. Be to, tyrimas buvo toks pat įtraukiantis, kaip ir pats Eugenijaus Brukmano tapatybės atradimas.

Rūta Nazaraitė —

*From Restoration to Attribution*